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Citation for published version:

Appleton, N 2014, 'The Fourth Decade of the Avadnaataka', *Asian Literature and Translation*, vol. 2, no. 5, pp. 1-35. <<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/share/research/centres/chra/whatwedo/chra-journal-contents.html>>

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Asian Literature and Translation

Publisher Rights Statement:

Open Access Journal

©Appleton, N. (2014). The Fourth Decade of the Avadnaataka. *Asian Literature and Translation*, 2(5), 1-35.

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The Fourth Decade of the *Avadānaśataka*

Translated
by
Naomi Appleton

I here present a translation of the fourth decade (stories 31-40) of the *Avadānaśataka*, using Speyer's 1906-1909 edition¹ – and Vaidya's 1958 reprint thereof – as my base text. My approach to the text is explained in the introduction to my translation of the second decade (*Asian Literature and Translation* 1/7, 2013).² As noted there, I am particularly interested in the *jātaka* stories (stories of the past lives of the Buddha) contained within the *Avadānaśataka*. While the *jātakas* of the second decade focus upon karmic backstories for positive events in the Buddha's final life, in the fourth decade we find a stronger focus on the character of the Buddha-to-be as he practices the many virtues required for the attainment of Buddhahood. In that sense the stories are much closer to the *jātakas* of the Pāli tradition, and indeed several of the stories are also found in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* as well as other early Buddhist narrative collections.³

* * * * *

The Fourth Section

A summary of it:

Padmaka and also the Mouthful, Dharmapāla and then Śibi,
Surūpa and Maitrakanya, the Hare and the Dharma-seeker,
Anāthapiṇḍada and Subhadra, together make up this section.

31. Padmaka

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas*⁴ – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was

¹ I am using the 1958 reprint of Speyer. Speyer's edition is also available on GRETIL – the Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages - <http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil.htm>

² For ease of reference, textual notes from the earlier decade that are also relevant to this decade are reproduced in this article. In some cases my translation of stock passages here varies from in my previous translation, and where relevant this is discussed in footnotes. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this translation, who made a number of useful suggestions and corrections that have helped me to create a more readable and accurate text.

³ Such parallels are noted in footnotes. For parallels with other *avadāna* collections see the extensive notes following Feer's translation of each story.

⁴ These are various categories of what DeCaroli (2004 *passim*) has usefully dubbed 'spirit-deities'. Although the categories are not well-defined and often overlap, there are some general characteristics associated with each: *nāgas* are serpent deities associated with underwater palaces, *yakṣas* are often local demons or deities, *asura* is the term given to anti-gods or demons, *garuḍas* are bird-deities in conflict with the *nāgas*, *kinnaras* are often said to be half-man half-horse, and *mahoragas* are a type of serpent-demon. The term that precedes these – which I have translated as gods – is *deva*, which is usually used to refer to gods of the heavens, though it can also refer to earth-dwelling gods such as those that inhabit trees.

knowing⁵ and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. In the autumn the monks⁶ were troubled by illness, such that they became pale and jaundiced, their bodies thin and their limbs weak. The Exalted One, however, was strong and free from illness, unafflicted, with untroubled limbs. Seeing this the monks asked the Exalted One, “See, Exalted One, these monks are afflicted with an autumnal illness. They are pale and jaundiced, their bodies thin and their limbs weak. But the Exalted One is unafflicted, with untroubled limbs. He is by nature strong and free from illness, and possessed of regular digestion.”

The Exalted One said, “O monks, actions that the Tathāgata performed and accumulated in other previous births have come together and their conditions have matured. Being inevitable they have approached like a strong current.⁷ These actions have been done and accumulated by me. Who else will experience their results? O monks, deeds done do not mature in the earth element, nor in the water element, nor in the fire element, nor in the wind element. Rather, deeds done, whether pure or impure, ripen in what is enumerated as the aggregates, the physical elements and the elements of sense-experience (*skandhadhātvaṃyataneṣu*).”

“Actions do not disappear even after a hundred aeons.

When they have reached completion and it is time, they fruit for living beings.”

“Formerly, monks, in a past time, a king called Padmaka ruled in the city of Vārāṇasī. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. And that king was faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, affectionate towards his family, and a giver of great gifts, being generous with everything, renouncing everything, giving up without attachment. At that time a disease arose in Vārāṇasī because of a disturbance in the elements or a quirk of fate.⁸ Most of the people became pale and sick. Seeing them the king became compassionate, thinking, ‘I must be a protector and medicine for these people.’ So the king assembled doctors who lived all over the place, and having observed the motivations, dispositions and inclinations of these

⁵ Although MMW only records the meaning ‘known’ or ‘known as’ for *jñāta*, DP records a possible alternative reading ‘knowing’ for the Pāli equivalent *ñāta*. This seems more natural here, in this praise of the Buddha. However, an alternative is that he was ‘well-known’ i.e. famous.

⁶ When used in the plural, *bhikkhavaḥ* can refer to both monks and nuns. At some points in the narrative it is clear that the whole fourfold assembly (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen) is in attendance. However, it is difficult to find an appropriate English term that is gender-neutral, with ‘monastics’ perhaps being the best option. Thus I have translated as simply ‘monks’ throughout, but this should not be read as excluding nuns.

⁷ I previously translated *oghavat*, which literally means ‘possessor of a strong current’ as ‘river’. However, as the reviewer rightly pointed out, this does not fully communicate the inevitable force of karmic consequences that is the purpose of the image. This whole stock passage about the inevitability of karmic fruiting for each individual is repeated many times throughout the *Avadānaśataka*, not just in reference to the Buddha’s own past actions. The message is clearly that even the Buddha himself is in the same position as other beings in that he is subject to karma.

⁸ Perhaps translating *kālavaiṣāmya* as ‘quirk of fate’ is too liberal. It could also refer to a disturbance in the seasons. The broader meaning is clear, however: the disease is not the king’s fault, nor the fault of his citizens, but has arisen because of forces outside the laws of karma.

beings⁹ he undertook himself to bring together all the herbs and medicines. But while those beings were being treated a lot of time elapsed, and although he had amassed doctors, medicines, herbs and attendants it was not possible to cure them. The king called together all the doctors and respectfully questioned them again: 'Why is my treatment no good?' The doctors deliberated and then spoke with their united understanding about the qualities and faults: 'Your majesty, this [disease] has the marks of being caused by a disturbance in the elements or a quirk of fate. As such, your majesty, there is but one remedy: the fish named Rohita. If you were to obtain that, you would be able to cure them.' The king began to search for a Rohita fish, but even when he hunted along with many spies they did not find it, and this they announced to the king.

"On one occasion the king set out along a road outside, and the sick people stood assembled together and said to the king: 'Save us from our illness, Great King! Grant us life!' Hearing these powerful words spoken by those who were fading away and sinking into wretchedness and despair, the king's heart was shaken by compassion and with his face clouded over with tears he reflected, 'What would I want with this sort of life, or sovereignty and supreme lordship of this kind? I am one who is unable to bring peace to others who are suffering.' Having reflected in this way the king made a great gift of his goods, established the eldest prince in the sovereignty and supreme lordship, asked pardon of his kinsmen and also of the citizens and courtiers, comforted the afflicted, and undertook the eightfold observance.¹⁰ He climbed up to the terrace at the top of the palace and scattered perfume, flowers, fragrances, garlands and unguents. Facing east he undertook a vow: 'By this truth, this true utterance – Having seen these beings tormented by illness and experiencing a severe plight, I am voluntarily abandoning my own life!¹¹ – by this truth, by this declaration of truth, may I arise as a great Rohita fish in this sandy river.' Having said this he threw himself off the palace roof terrace.

"At the moment he fell he met his end and arose as a great Rohita fish in the sandy river. Thus the gods uttered a cry in all the kingdom: 'A great Rohita fish has arisen in the sandy river as ambrosial medicine for those who have been long afflicted by this great sickness!' On hearing this a great body of people came out bearing knives and bringing baskets, and began to carve him up with various sharp knives, even as he lived. And the Bodhisattva, his body being torn apart, suffused them all with friendliness and tearfully, with face full of tears, he thought: 'I have obtained something advantageous, namely that these beings will become happy through my own meat and blood.' Through that undertaking he satiated those beings with his own flesh and blood for twelve years, and did not turn away from the thought of unsurpassed perfect and full awakening.

⁹ *teṣāṃ sattvānāṃ nidānamāśayānuśayaṃ copalakṣya*. On the combination of *nidāna* and *āśaya-anuśaya* in this way see BHSD 296 (under *nidāna*). Edgerton translates this phrase as 'noting the motives, the disposition and inclination of these creatures (who were afflicted with a pestilence; i.e. finding them worthy)' (BHSD 296). Feer's rendering – that he observed the cause, seat and effects [of the illness] (1979: 114) – seems a bit forced, since, as Edgerton points out (BHSD 296), the term *āśaya-anuśaya* cannot really be applied to the disease. An alternative reading, as pointed out by the reviewer of my translation, is that the king is examining the motivations of the doctors and mistrusts them.

¹⁰ *aṣṭāṅgasamanvāgataṃ vrataṃ samādāya*. This probably refers to the eight precepts that are observed on special occasions.

¹¹ *svajīvitamiṣṭaṃ parityajāmi* could also mean 'I abandon my own cherished life' or 'I abandon my life as a sacrifice'.

“When the illness of these beings was calmed, the Rohita fish uttered this sound: ‘Listen, good beings. I am that king Padmaka. Through sacrificing my own life for your benefit, I arose with a body of this kind. You should render your minds faithful towards me.’¹² When I have attained unsurpassed perfect and full awakening, then I will liberate you from a terrible sickness and establish you in the perfect condition of *nirvāṇa*.’ Hearing that the people became faithful, and the king, courtiers and citizens worshipped him with flowers, perfumes, garlands and unguents. They made this resolve: ‘O doer of an exceedingly difficult deed, when you have attained unsurpassed perfect and full awakening, let us become your disciples!’”

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? He who was the king named Padmaka at that time, on that occasion, that was me. And on account of making that kind of sacrifice, I have experienced boundless happiness in *saṃsāra* and now have attained unsurpassed perfect and full awakening, and am possessed of regular digestion. I digest whatever I eat, drink, consume or taste with the same pleasure, I have little pain and all my illness is in the past.¹³ Therefore, monks, you should train in this way: We will cultivate compassion towards all beings. This should be your training.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

32. The Mouthful

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinṇaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinṇaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. There the Exalted One addressed the monks: “O monks, if beings knew the fruits of generosity and the ripe fruits of sharing gifts,¹⁴ as I know the fruits of generosity and the ripe fruits of sharing gifts, then they would not enjoy their last mouthful of water or morsel of food without first having given it and shared it. And if they should obtain a worthy recipient, selfishness would not arise, overcome their minds or remain. But when beings do not know the fruits of generosity and the ripe fruits of sharing gifts, as I know the fruits of generosity and the ripe fruits of sharing gifts, then they eat without giving or sharing, with meanness of mind, and selfish thoughts arise, overcome their minds and remain in them.”

¹² *mamāntike cittaṃ prasādayadhvam*. Alternatively, ‘you should gladden your hearts towards me’ or ‘make your minds calm’. Generally, *prasāda* in the *Avadānaśataka* refers to a specific positive state of mind comparable to the experience of faith that leads to a transformation. Animals, *pretas*, hell-beings and inferior humans are particularly liable to rebirth improvements due to *prasāda*, which is often induced by an encounter with the Buddha. See Appleton 2014: 28-9, 48, 57 and for a useful discussion of *prasāda* in the *Divyāvadāna* see Rotman 2009.

¹³ Following Speyer’s recommendation (1958: 172 n.6) that this be read as *rogatā* (= *roga*) + *atīta*.

¹⁴ I have tried to preserve the ambiguity in the term *dānaśaṃvibhāga*, which could mean simply distribution of gifts, or partaking in gifts, or encouraging others to give gifts.

The Exalted One spoke thus, and having spoken thus the Teacher and Well-farer (*sugata*) further said:

“For if beings knew what has been said by the Great Sage,
about the result of generosity, this would be of great benefit:
Those who would not eat without first giving, do not become selfish,
and their minds never become grasping.
But those fools, obscured by delusion, who do not know,
those beings who would eat with meanness of mind,
selfishness arises and overcomes their minds and is established there.”

When the Exalted One had spoken this *sūtra*, the monks became doubtful and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, the remover of all doubts: “It is a marvel, sir, that the Exalted One should explain the quality of generosity, and the ripe fruits of sharing gifts.” The Exalted One said, “What is the marvel in this, monks, that the Tathāgata should explain the quality of generosity and the ripe fruits of sharing gifts? In a past time I gave up my own last mouthful because of a beggar who had arrived in my doorway. Listen, and concentrate your mind on the good and right. I will explain.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past, a king named Brahmadata ruled his kingdom. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. And that king was faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, affectionate towards his family, and a giver of great gifts, being generous with everything, renouncing everything, giving up without attachment. At a later time a great famine came about, resembling the famine that occurs between the aeons.¹⁵ The people became anxious and afraid at this unseasonable famine, and their necks and cheeks were emaciated with hunger such that they looked like dead bodies.¹⁶ They came together as a group and visited the king. Having greeted him with ‘Victory!’ and ‘Long life!’ they said, ‘Your majesty, protect us from the danger of this famine! Grant us life!’ The king addressed his steward: ‘You, man, is there food and water in the storeroom such that there is enough for us and for all of these people?’ Hearing this the steward said, ‘Your majesty, having investigated the grain I will tell you.’ Then with men skilled in counting he made his calculation and announced: ‘There is for a certain time one morsel each day for all the inhabitants of the kingdom and two morsels for the king.’ Then the king called the people together and said, ‘Good people, having come here each day, you can eat in the palace and then go.’ So each day they came, and each one individually ate a single morsel and then went where they pleased.

“Now there was a certain brahmin who was not part of those calculations, and having heard about it from the others he said to the king, ‘Your majesty, I heard about the calculations as I was travelling the country. A morsel should be

¹⁵ The *antara-kalpa* here presumably refers to the period of destruction between two aeons (*kalpas*). See BHSD 38.

¹⁶ Or *pretāśrayasadrśāḥ* could indicate they looked like ghosts. For the common Buddhist use of *āśraya* as meaning ‘body’ see BHSD 110.

given to me too!’ The king gave one of his own two morsels to the brahmin, and proceeded to eat a single morsel like the people.

“It happened that Śakra, king of the gods, saw and knew what was going on below. It occurred to him, ‘Surely it is a very difficult thing to do, what the king of Vārāṇasī has done. What if I were to investigate this?’ So Śakra the king of the gods made himself look like a brahmin and approached the king at his mealtime. After greeting him with ‘Victory!’ and ‘Long life!’ he said, ‘I am starving. Favour me with your own morsel.’ The king resolved out of compassion to give up his own life, and gave his own morsel to the brahmin, thus having no food left. Because of that resolve he did this with six food portions, and at the sight of the many people eating, he was filled with extraordinary joy. Then Śakra the king of the gods, having seen the king’s resolve to carry out something so incredibly difficult, made his brahmin disguise disappear and stood there in his own form. He gladdened the king, saying, ‘Very good! Very good great king! We are humbled by your lordship’s resolve that was so difficult to accomplish. The people have a protector with a king of this kind! Do not grieve, but sow all your seeds in the country. On the seventh day I will let loose the rains in the manner of Great Indra,¹⁷ such that all the grain will burst forth.’ The king had that done, and Śakra let loose the rains in the manner of Great Indra such that the famine came to an end and a time of plenty arrived.”

The Exalted One said: “What do you think, monks? He who at that time and on that occasion was the king named Brahmadata, that was me. It was I that gave gifts of this type, during a famine of this kind, by letting go of my own life. Thus in this way the monks should train: We will give such gifts and make merit. In this way, monks, you should train.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

33. Dharmapāla

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Rājagṛha in Kalandakanivāpa in the Venu Grove. Now the deluded man Devadatta let loose the elephant Dhanapālaka in order to kill the Exalted One, and he filled a well with poisoned powder, and he sent forth assassins. He was an attacker, an adversary and an enemy to the Exalted One for a long time. Yet the Exalted One had friendly thoughts towards him, thought of his welfare and maintained a compassionate mind. The monks questioned the Exalted One, “See, Exalted One, how this Devadatta strives to kill the Exalted One, and yet the Exalted One has friendly thoughts towards him, thinks of his welfare and maintains a compassionate mind.”

¹⁷ *tathāvidhaṃ mātendram varṣaṃ* could also indicate ‘rains of the Great Indra variety’, as in my previous translation. It is not entirely clear whether or not Śakra is Great Indra, for he is certainly the Indra of Brahmanical mythology. In story 37 the abode of Great Indra shakes at the truth-utterance of the Bodhisattva; this is a motif usually associated with Śakra.

The Exalted One said, “O monks, what is the wonder in this now, when the Tathāgata has eradicated attachment, hatred and delusion, is free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, and is all-knowing, knowledgeable in all ways, master of all that is to be known? In times past, when I was affected by attachment, hatred and delusion and just a little child, my mind was not corrupted in the presence of someone who was determined to kill me. Listen, and concentrate your mind on the good and right. I will explain.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past, a king named Brahmadatta ruled his kingdom in the city of Vārāṇasī. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. And that king was faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, affectionate towards his family, and a giver of great gifts, being generous with everything, renouncing everything, giving up without attachment. Now that king had a cruel, passionate and impetuous queen named Durmatī (Weak-minded), and he had a single son named Dharmapāla (Protector of the Dharma), who was born of Durmatī. That Dharmapāla was kind, faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, and affectionate towards his family. The sight of him was dear, pleasing, desirable and charming to all of the brahmins and householders of Vārāṇasī. And having approached a teacher he learnt his letters along with the other children.

Some time later, in springtime, the king, along with his queen and his retinue of women, went out to a park in a woodland that was filled with trees in full bloom and resounding with the cries of geese, cranes, peacocks, parrots, mynahs, cuckoos and pheasants. There in the king’s park he amused himself with the women of his inner quarters, and Queen Durmatī was filled with jealousy and anger, and became furious. The king offered her a share of leftover drink,¹⁸ but she, angry, dismissed the king’s gift: ‘Let me drink the blood of your son, if I am to drink a portion of your drink!’ They say that someone who is absolutely devoted to sense pleasures does not think at all about the evil deed that is to be done. Thus, although King Brahmadatta was righteous, and although he was being soothed by the women of the inner quarters, because there was no end to his lust and passion he burnt with a fiery anger. His anger swelled, he gave the order: ‘Go, cut Dharmapāla’s throat and bring his blood to drink!’

“Then Prince Dharmapāla, who was in the children’s hall, heard about this and began to cry. He said, ‘Alas for the community of beings in *saṃsāra*, that under the power of anger they would sacrifice a child who has come from their own body!’ Then Dharmapāla, adorned in all his ornaments, fell at the feet of his father and said, ‘Good father, be gracious. I am blameless and should not be sacrificed. And all fathers cherish¹⁹ their sons.’ The king replied, ‘Son, if your mother will relent, I too will do so.’ So Dharmapāla instead approached his

¹⁸ See Speyer’s note (1958: 179 n.7) on the unusually abbreviated nature of this passage.

¹⁹ There may be a deliberate pun and/or ambiguity here, for *iṣṭa* can mean ‘cherished’ or ‘sacrificed’.

mother, and threw himself crying at her feet. With hands joined in respect he said, 'Mother, relent! Don't deprive me of my life!' But she was not pleased with this wretched and pitiable speech and did not relent. The executioners cut Prince Dharmapāla's throat with a sharp sword and Queen Durmatī drank his blood. Durmatī did not repent, but Prince Dharmapāla died with his mind kindly disposed towards his mother, father and the executioners."

The Exalted One said, "What do you think, monks? He who was that prince named Dharmapāla at that time, on that occasion, that was me. And Queen Durmatī, that was Devadatta.²⁰ Even then, in the hands of the executioner, I had friendly thoughts, and likewise now I have friendly, kind and compassionate thoughts towards one who strives to kill me. In this way you should train, monks: We will cultivate friendly thoughts towards all beings. In this way, monks, you should train."

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One's speech.

34. Śibi

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinṇaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinṇaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. At that time and on that occasion in Śrāvastī there were two congregations of the monks, one on the first day of the Āṣāḍha (June/July) rains, and the second at the full moon of Kārtika (October/November). There the monks cooked their [earthenware] bowls, washed their robes, and sewed together dust-heap rags [as robes]. One of the monks wanted to sew a robe but was unable to insert the thread into the hole of the needle. He spoke with words that were heavy with grief and lamentation: "Who in the world wishes for merit?" The Exalted One was taking his walk not far away. The Exalted One, sounding like a kettledrum or as beautiful as a cuckoo, deep, sweet and splendid, stretched out his arm like the trunk of an elephant and said, "O monk, I in the world wish for merit!" Then that monk, hearing heard the Exalted One's voice that was endowed with the five qualities,²¹ became agitated and quickly seized the Exalted One's hand and placed it on his own head. He said, "Exalted One, this hand of yours has accumulated generosity, good conduct, forbearance, vigour, meditation and wisdom during three incalculable aeons."

²⁰ This is an interesting and rare case of gender variation between births. Several *jātaka* stories portray Devadatta's attempts to kill the Buddha-to-be, though he rarely succeeds. A story of filicide in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (542. *Candakumāra-jātaka* or *Khaṇḍahāla-jātaka*) has some resonances with the present tale. In it we find a king persuaded to sacrifice his son in order to gain heaven. The brahmin advisor who schemes to have the prince killed is Devadatta, and the prince himself is the Bodhisattva. The *Culladhammapāla-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 358) also resonates, though here it is an angry king (=Devadatta) who orders his baby son (=the Bodhisattva) to be mutilated and killed, despite the desperate entreaties of his queen. The *Mahādhammapāla-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 447), with its parallel in the *Mahāvastu*, is unrelated.

²¹ It is not entirely clear what these *pañcāṅga* are. The term probably refers to the five varieties of music (see BHSD *pañcāṅgika* and PED *pañca-angikaturiya*).

And then the Exalted One said, “I am eager for merit, monk. I have a taste for virtues, monk, such that I am never satiated.”

The monks became doubtful and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, remover of all doubts: “It is a marvel, sir, that the Exalted One is never satiated when it comes to the accumulation²² of merit.”²³ The Exalted One said, “O monks, what is the wonder in this now, when the Tathāgata has eradicated attachment, hatred and delusion, is free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, and is all-knowing, knowledgeable in all ways, master of all that is to be known? In times past, when I was affected by attachment, hatred and delusion, and was not free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, I was not satiated with the accumulation of merit. Listen, and concentrate your mind on the good and right and I will explain.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past, a king named Śibi ruled his kingdom in the capital city Śibighoṣā. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. And King Śibi was faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, affectionate towards his family, and a giver of great gifts, being generous with everything, renouncing everything, giving up without attachment. At day-break he arose, entered the sacrificial arena and bestowed food on those who desired food, and clothes on those in need of clothes. He parted with wealth, grain, gold, money, jewels, pearls, cat’s-eye gems, conches, stone and coral, and he never became satiated with the accumulation of merit. He entered his inner quarters and gave food and covers to the people there, and also to the princes and courtiers, the army, and the city and country folk.

“Then it occurred to King Śibi, ‘Human beings are satisfied with this, but the small animals remain, and what will satisfy them?’ He had given up his whole fortune and lived in a single cloth, but it occurred to him that his own body remained. He thought: ‘I will give my own body to the small animals.’ He cut his own body with a sword, presented himself where the gnats and mosquitoes were, and remained there. He refreshed them with his blood, as if they were as dear as his only son.

“Then Śakra the king of the gods became aware of what was going on below. It occurred to him, ‘Does this King Śibi do this for the benefit of living beings, out of compassion? I should investigate this.’ He made himself appear as a vulture, coloured black like antimony, approached King Śibi, and began to pluck out an eye with his beak. The king did not tremble, but regarded that vulture with

²² The term here, *saṃskāra*, has a range of technical meanings in Buddhism, including ‘predispositions’ arising from past lives, and ‘conditions’ relating to normal existence. However, the more normal Sanskrit meaning of ‘attainment’ or ‘accumulation’ seems most likely here. Implicit is the surprise – on the part of the monks – that the Buddha, despite his buddhahood, still takes delight in conditioned mundane merit-making activities associated with rebirth. Feer leaves the term untranslated.

²³ The term *puṇyamaya* is equivalent to *puṇya*, which is usually translated as ‘merit’, and I have followed this norm despite the consequent need to ignore the plural of the Sanskrit. Merit is the primary currency in terms of Buddhist karma, and this is presumably why the monks are surprised at the Buddha’s continuing interest in good works despite his liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

eyes filled with friendliness and said, ‘Dear child, use my body as you please: I make a gift of it.’ Then Śakra the king of the gods was overcome, and making himself appear as a brahmin he stood before King Śibi and said, ‘Good, lord of the earth. Give me your pair of eyes.’ The king responded, ‘Great brahmin, take as it pleases you. I have no obstacles in this.’²⁴ At this Śakra the king of the gods became even more pleased. Putting aside his disguise as a brahmin he stood in his own form and spoke encouragingly to the king: ‘Very good! Very good, O lord of the earth! Your resolve is firm, your vow is unshakeable, and you have attained great compassion towards living beings, such that you are even proficient with regard to terrifying experiences. With this resolve it will not be long before you awaken to unsurpassed full and complete buddhahood!’”

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? He who on that occasion, at that time, was the king called Śibi, that was me. Even at that time I was never satiated with accumulating merit, and how much more so now. In this way, monks, you should train: We will give gifts; we will make merit. In this way, monks, you should train.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

35. Surūpa

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. When the Exalted One had come out of his meditative seclusion and taught the sweet *dharma* – sweet as honey²⁵ – to the fourfold assembly,²⁶ and several hundred of those assembled heard the sweet *dharma* from the Exalted One with unwavering faculties,²⁷ then the monks became doubtful and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, remover of all doubts: “See, sir, how these beings who have become receptacles for the jewel of the *dharma*, regard it as worthy of listening to with respect.” The Exalted One said, “Listen, monks, just as the Tathāgata listened to the *dharma* with respect and comprehended it. Concentrate your mind on the good and right and I will explain.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past, in the city of Vārāṇasī, a king named Surūpa (Handsome) ruled. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many

²⁴ It is this episode – the gift of eyes to a brahmin – that forms the focus of the Śibi story in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (499. *Sivi-jātaka*) and the *Jātakamālā* (2. *Śibi*). Another episode involving the generous King Śibi, in which he sacrifices his flesh to ransom a dove, is also known in Buddhist narrative, as well as in Jain narrative and the *Mahābhārata*.

²⁵ The *dharma* is described as *madhuramadhuram* and *kṣaudraṃ madhvivāṇeḍakam*, where *kṣaudra* and *aneḍaka* may be types of honey or simply synonyms for honey, and *madhu* can mean ‘sweet’ (like *madhura*) or ‘honey’. Reproducing such repetition in the translation is problematic.

²⁶ Namely the assemblies of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.

²⁷ The *indriyāṇi* may be the six sense faculties (including the mind) or perhaps the five moral faculties (*śraddhā*, *vīrya*, *smṛti*, *samādhi*, *prajñā*). See BHSD 114.

people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. And that king was faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, affectionate towards his family, and a giver of great gifts, being generous with everything, renouncing everything, giving up without attachment. And that king had a queen named Sundarikā (Beauty), and she was handsome, good-looking, and pleasant, furnished with all major and minor limbs. And he had a single son named Sundaraka (Good-looking), who was cherished and loved, dear and charming, patient and amenable. Now on a certain occasion King Surūpa became desirous of the *dharma*, and having assembled all his courtiers he said, 'Lords, seek the *dharma*.²⁸ It is the *dharma* that pleases me.' Then those courtiers, having joined their palms in respect, reported to the king, 'The *dharma* is hard to obtain, Great King. We have heard, Great King, that *dharma* arises from the arising of Buddhas in the world.' The king fastened a golden casket on top of a flag-pole and made a proclamation with bells through the whole realm: 'I will give this golden casket to whoever will speak the *dharma* to me, and I will pay him great honour!' A great deal of time went by, and no teacher of the *dharma* could be found. The king was tormented with longing on account of the *dharma*.

"Śakra the king of the gods saw and knew what was going on below. He saw the king distressed on account of the *dharma*, and this occurred to him: 'What if I were to test this King Surūpa?' Thus, having made himself into the form of a *yakṣa*, altering his hands, feet and eyes, he said to the king in the midst of his multiple assemblies, 'Sir is desirous of the *dharma*. I will speak the *dharma* to you.' At hearing the word '*dharma*' the king became delighted and joyful, and said to the *yakṣa*, 'Speak, *guhya*,²⁹ and I will hear the *dharma*.³⁰ The *guhya* replied, 'Oh Great king! *Dharmas* manifest only to the happy.³¹ I am hungry, so offer me some food.' Hearing this, the king addressed his men: 'Bring different kinds of food and drink for him!' The *yakṣa* said, 'I eat freshly killed flesh and blood. Grant me your only son, Sundara.' Having heard that the king became extremely dejected: 'After a long time,³² today, I get to hear the *dharma*, but at a price it is not worth.' But Prince Sundara heard this and, falling at his father's feet, he begged the king: 'Excuse me, your majesty. Your majesty's wish should be fulfilled.³³ Give me as food to the *guhya*.' So the king, for the sake of the *dharma*, gave his only son,

²⁸ See Speyer's discussion (1958: 188 n.9) and his suggested emendation of *dharmān* (plural) to *dharmam* (singular). Since the term appears in the plural again later it may be best to keep the plural here, though for a smooth translation I follow Speyer.

²⁹ A *guhya* is another term for a spirit-deity, usually – like *yakṣas* – considered to be part of Kubera's retinue. Here it would appear to be a synonym for *yakṣa*.

³⁰ As in an occurrence noted above, *dharma* is again plural here, which is difficult to render, but clearly intentional.

³¹ Following Speyer's emendation of *abhilaṣanti* ('are desirous of') to *abhilasanti*. He suggests for the meaning: 'it is only when one feels one's self at ease that the *dharmas* will make their appearance' (1958: 189 n.8). Feer (1979: 129) translates 'les lois exigent le bien-être', which seems to make best sense of the circumstances; see also his discussion (1979: 129 n.1).

³² The phrase *kadācit karhicit* seems to indicate not simply 'sometimes' but 'rarely' or 'after a long wait'. For this meaning see Pāli *kadāci karahaci* DP I 629.

³³ Alternatively, 'let the deity's (*yakṣa*'s) wish be fulfilled', as Feer chooses to translate. However, Śakra has not been referred to as a *deva* since his disguise.

who was cherished and loved, dear and charming, patient and amenable, to the *yakṣa*.

“Then the *yakṣa*, through his supernormal power, made it appear to the king and his assembly that he was tearing apart his major and minor limbs one by one, eating them and drinking his blood.³⁴ Having seen that the king, desiring the *dharma*, did not grieve. The *guhyaka* said to the king, ‘I am not satiated, earthly king. Give me more!’ Then the king gave him his beloved wife, and he appeared to eat her in the same way. He spoke to the king further: ‘Oh earthly king, today I do not get enough to satisfy me.’ Then the king said to the *yakṣa*, ‘Dear one, I have given my only son and my beloved wife. Do you ask for more?’ The *guhyaka* replied, ‘Give me your own body! This will bring me satisfaction.’ The king said, ‘If I give you my own body, how will I then be able to hear the *dharma*? Won’t you speak the *dharma* to me first? I will give up my own body after I have gained the *dharma*.’ Then the *guhyaka*, having gained this promise from the king, taught the *dharma* before that assembly of several hundred:

‘Grief is born from what is dear. Fear is born from what is dear.

For those who are free from what is dear, there is no grief, and how could there be fear?’

Upon hearing this verse, the king was delighted of mind, his senses joyful and glad. He said to the *yakṣa*: ‘*Guhyaka*, here is my body. Do with it as you wish.’

“Then Śakra the king of the gods knew that the king was as unshakeable as Mount Meru with regard to unsurpassed perfect and full buddhahood. He set aside his *yakṣa* form and stood in his own form. With his eyes opened by faith, he took the son in one hand and the wife in the second, and said in order to encourage the king, ‘Very good! Excellent, good man! You are firm in your preparation. With this resolve it will not be long before you awaken to unsurpassed perfect and full buddhahood. And you are reunited with the people you desire.’ Then the king said this to Śakra the king of the gods: ‘Very good, very good Kauśika! My desire for the *dharma* has been fulfilled!’”

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? He who, at that time and on that occasion, was the king called Surūpa, that was me. Ānanda was Prince Sundara, and this Sundarikā was Yaśodharā. Even then, monks, I gave up cherished belongings for the sake of the *dharma*, and even gave up my own life, how much more so now. In this way you should train, monks: We will revere, pay respects to, honour and worship the *dharma*. Having revered, paid respects to, honoured and worshipped the *dharma* we will live in reliance on it. In this way, monks, you should train.

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

36. Maitrakanyaka

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided

³⁴ Here Speyer (and, following him, Vaidya) inserts * * * indicating a lacuna, though none of the meaning would appear to be lost.

with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. There the Exalted One addressed the monks: “O monks, those families in which the mother and father are properly honoured, properly worshipped and properly looked after with joy are [said to be] ‘with Brahmā’. And what is the reason for that? Because, in accordance with the *dharma*, for the son of the family the mother and father have become Brahmās.³⁵ Those families in which the mother and father are properly honoured, properly worshipped and properly looked after with joy are ‘with a preceptor’.³⁶ And what is the reason for that? Because, in accordance with the *dharma*, for the son of the family the mother and father are preceptors. Those families in which the mother and father are properly honoured, properly worshipped and properly looked after with joy are ‘worthy of sacrifice’.³⁷ And what is the reason for that? Because, in accordance with the *dharma*, for the son of the family the mother and father are worthy of sacrifice. Those families in which the mother and father are properly honoured, properly worshipped and properly looked after with joy are ‘with Agni’. And what is the reason for that? Because, in accordance with the *dharma*, for the son of the family the mother and father are Agni. Those families in which the mother and father are properly honoured, properly worshipped and properly looked after with joy are ‘with the gods’. And what is the reason for that? Because, in accordance with the *dharma*, for the son of the family the mother and father are gods.” Thus spoke the Exalted One. Having said this the Well-farer, the Teacher, also spoke the following:

“For a mother and father are Brahmā, and one’s first preceptor;
To a son they are worthy of sacrifice, they are Agni, and the gods.
Therefore the wise should revere and honour them,
by massaging, bathing and cleaning their feet,
or with food and drink, clothes, beds and seats.
That wise man who attends on his mother and father,
becomes irreproachable, and after death enjoys heaven.”

When the Exalted One had spoken this *sūtra*, the monks became doubtful, and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, remover of all doubts: “It is a marvel, sir, that the Exalted One should speak in praise of attending on one’s venerable mother and father!” The Exalted One replied, “O monks, what is the wonder in this now, if the Tathāgata, who has eradicated attachment, hatred and delusion, who is free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, and is all-knowing, knowledgeable in all ways, master of all that is to be known, should speak in praise of attending on one’s venerable mother and father? In times past, when I was affected by attachment, hatred and delusion, and was not free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, having done my mother a small injury I experienced powerful suffering. Listen, monks. Focus your minds on the good and the right and I will explain.”

³⁵ The term is *brahmabhūtau*, ‘brahma-beings’ or ‘brahma-become’, indicating that the parents have been absorbed into Brahmā or become Brahmā gods.

³⁶ The term *ācārya* could also be translated simply as ‘teacher’, but the more specific meaning of ‘preceptor’ seems appropriate here, given that this series of statements is drawing on Vedic and Brahmanical terminology.

³⁷ The word *āhavanīya* in a Vedic and Brahmanical context more specifically refers to the consecrated ritual fire that is worthy of being offered sacrificial oblations. In a Buddhist context the term has the more general meaning ‘worthy of offerings’ or ‘worthy of honour’.

“Formerly, monks, in times past, there was in this city of Vārāṇasī a caravan-leader called Mitra. He was rich, of great wealth and property. His possessions were broad and extensive. He was furnished with wealth like Vaiśravaṇa, rivaling Vaiśravaṇa’s wealth. He took a wife from a similar family, and he played with her and made love to her and amused himself. But the sons that were born as a result of his playing and love-making and enjoyment died.³⁸ Resting his cheek in his hand he remained lost in thought: ‘I have a house full of riches, but I have no son or daughter. After my death, having declared me son-less all my property will be procured by the king.’ His friend advised, ‘If a son is born to you, you should give him a girl’s name, and then he will be long-lived.’ He, sonless and desiring a son, entreated Śiva, Varuṇa, Kubera, Śakra, Brahmā and so on, and various other gods, namely the gods of the forest and the gods of the grove, the gods of the crossroads, the gods of the three-way junctions and those who are receivers of offerings. He also entreated the deities associated with his birth, who shared his nature and were constantly bound to him. For there is this saying in the world, that sons and daughters are born because of entreaties. But this is not so, for if it were the case then each person would have a thousand sons just like a *cakravartin* king. Actually sons and daughters are born from the coming together of three conditions. What are these three conditions? The mother and father unite in love-making, the mother is healthy and in her fertile period, and a *gandharva* is standing by. From the coming together of these three conditions sons and daughters are born. But he continued to make entreaties, and a certain being came out from a particular group of beings and descended into his wife’s womb.³⁹

“There are five particular characteristics in any wise woman. What are the five? She knows when a man is enamoured, and she knows when he is indifferent. She knows the right time and season. She knows when her womb has been entered. She knows from whom her womb has been entered. She knows when it is a boy and she knows when it is a girl, for if it is a boy it lies on the right side of her womb and stays there, and if it is a girl it lies on the left side of her womb and stays there. She was thrilled and delighted and addressed her husband, ‘You are fortunate, noble lord! I have become pregnant. And because it lies on the right side of my womb it will certainly be a boy!’ He too was thrilled and delighted, and he raised his upper body and stretched out his right arm, and uttered this solemn speech: ‘O that I might see the face of a son, desired for a long time. May he not be born unworthy of me. May he do his duty. Having been supported by me, may he be my support. May he claim his inheritance, and may my family lineage last a long time. And may he, when we are gone, give gifts large or small and make merit, and dedicate that in our names, saying, “May this follow these two, wherever they have gone or arisen.”’ Knowing that she was pregnant, he kept her on the upper storey of a lofty palace, unrestrained, with everything necessary for the cold when it was cold, and everything necessary for the heat when it was hot. She was provided with food as prescribed by the doctors, neither too bitter nor too sour, neither too salty nor too sweet, neither too sharp nor too astringent, with food that was free from bitterness, sourness, saltiness, sweetness, sharpness and astringence. She was adorned with strings of pearls, and like a celestial

³⁸ Following Speyer’s emendation; see his explanatory note (1958: 195 n.3).

³⁹ The narrative appears to imply that the arrival of a foetus is as a result of the deity worship, even though this possibility is denied in the formulaic passage above. For a discussion of this incongruence in the formulae relating to conception see Collett 2006: 171.

nymph (*apsaras*) roving the Nandana Grove she moved from bed to bed and from seat to seat without descending to the ground below.⁴⁰ And she did not hear any unpleasant sound while her foetus was maturing.

“After eight or nine months had passed she gave birth. A boy was born who was well-formed, beautiful, pleasing, brilliant, golden-coloured, with a parasol-shaped head, pendulous arms, a broad forehead, a loud voice, eyebrows that joined, a prominent nose, and furnished with all the major and subsidiary limbs. When he was born they celebrated his birth-festival and fixed the naming ceremony. ‘What should be this boy’s name?’ His kinsmen said, ‘This boy is the son and daughter (*kanyā*) of Mitra, so the boy should be called Maitrakanyaka.’⁴¹

“The child Maitrakanyaka was given eight nurses: two shoulder-nurses [to carry him around], two wet-nurses, two nurses to keep him clean, and two nurses to play with. He was raised by these eight nurses, nourished with milk, coagulated milk, fresh butter, clarified butter, clarified butter extract, and served with various other hot foods. He grew quickly, like a lotus in a lake. His father crossed the great ocean and there met his death. When Maitrakanyaka was grown up, he said to his mother, ‘Mother, of what work did our father live off the fruits? Following him I too would like to work at that.’ His mother replied, ‘Son, your father was an *okkarika* tradesman.’⁴² If you desire to, you too should be an *okkarika* tradesman.’ She thought, ‘If I tell him that he was a merchant on the great ocean then he too at some stage will descend to the great ocean and meet his death there.’

“So he established an *okkarika* shop, and on the first day he made four *kārṣāpaṇas*,⁴³ and he gave them to his mother, saying, ‘Mother, bestow these on *śramaṇas*, brahmins, poor men and beggars.’ And she further said, ‘Your father was a perfume-seller.’ So he gave up being an *okkarika* tradesman and established a perfume shop, and he made eight *kārṣāpaṇas*. These too he gave to his mother, and then she said, ‘Your father was a goldsmith.’ So he gave up that shop and set up a goldsmith shop. In the first day he made sixteen *kārṣāpaṇas* and gave them to his mother. On the second day he made thirty-two *kārṣāpaṇas* and presented these also to his mother. But the goldsmiths became jealous and, knowing all the appointed trades they said, ‘Maitrakanyaka, why do you pursue an inappropriate livelihood? Your father was a merchant on the great ocean. Who directed you into this wrong trade?’ Impelled by the speech of the goldsmiths he went to his mother and said, ‘Mother, I have heard it said that our father was a merchant on the great ocean. Grant permission:⁴⁴ I too will go out on the great ocean!’ His mother replied, ‘This is true, son. But you are young and my only son. Don’t abandon me and go out on the great ocean!’ But he, insulted by those jealous-minded bad friends, did not give up. He disobeyed his mother’s words and had a

⁴⁰ It is not clear whether this means the lower floors of the palace, or simply the ground beneath the seats and beds. I have tried to maintain the ambiguity, though I am generally swayed by Rotman’s note on a parallel passage in the *Divyāvadāna* (Rotman 2008: 392-3 n. 94) that since she is being compared with a divinity it would make sense for her feet not to touch the ground, this being one of the features of the gods.

⁴¹ This rather peculiar justification for his name presumably harks back to the advice of Mitra’s friend, who suggested raising a son as a daughter in order to ensure the child’s longevity.

⁴² It is not clear what sort of tradesman an *okkarika* is. It is also found spelled *aukarika*. See Edgerton’s entries for both in BHSD.

⁴³ A coin or gold, the exact value of which is unknown.

⁴⁴ Alternatively *tadanujānāhi* could also, at a stretch, mean ‘admit it’, hence Feer translates ‘avoue!’ (1979: 133).

bell sounded in the city of Vārāṇasī: 'Listen, good men, citizens of Vārāṇasī! The merchant Maitrakanyaka, a caravan-leader, is going out into the great ocean! Whoever among you is courageous enough to go out on the great ocean with Maitrakanyaka the caravan-leader, without taxes, customs fees and ferry money, they should assemble their wares for taking on the great ocean.' Having carried out the auspicious ceremonies, portentous rites and benedictions, with a retinue of five hundred merchants and with carts, carriers, bags and baskets, buffaloes, cows and donkeys, he assembled his wares for going on the great ocean and set out. His mother, her heart agitated with love, her face clouded over with tears, clutched at his feet: 'Son, don't abandon me and go out on the great ocean!' But though he was pleased by these words that were heavy with distress and lamentation, he made his resolve. He struck his mother on the head with his foot and departed with his caravan. His mother said, 'O my son, may this act (*karman*) not ripen for you!'

"In due course, passing through⁴⁵ villages, towns, districts, capitals and cities, he reached the shore of the ocean. He obtained a vessel for five hundred *purāṇas*,⁴⁶ and taking the five types of crew⁴⁷ - the conveyer, sailor, fisherman and helmsman - he made three proclamations and set off into the sea. But as the boat was going along it unluckily fell into trouble on account of a *makara* fish, and Maitrakanyaka, clinging to a plank of wood, reached dry land. He walked about on that land until he saw, not far off, a city named Ramanaka (Charming). He approached it, and there four celestial nymphs appeared, beautiful, good-looking and charming. They said, 'Come, Maitrakanyaka, you are welcome. Here is our food-house and drink-house, our clothes house and our sleeping house, abounding in various kinds of gems, pearls, cats-eye, conch-shells, crystal, coral, gold and silver. Come, and we will enjoy ourselves.' He experienced pleasure with them for several years, just like a being who has made merit and done good deeds. They prohibited him from going along the path south, but being forbidden from the southern road only made him want to go there more.⁴⁸

"In due course he went along that path to the south and saw a city called Sadāmatta (Constant Revelry). He arrived at the gate, and eight celestial nymphs came out, who were even more beautiful, more good-looking and more charming. They said, 'Come, Maitrakanyaka, you are welcome. Here is our food-house and drink-house, our clothes house and our sleeping house, abounding in various kinds of gems, pearls, cats-eye, conch-shells, crystal, coral, gold and silver. Come, and we will enjoy ourselves.' He experienced pleasure with them for several years, just like a being who has made merit and done good deeds. They prohibited him from going along the path south, but being forbidden from the southern road only made him want to go there more. Again he went along that path to the south and saw a city called Nandana (Beautiful). He arrived at the gate, and sixteen celestial nymphs came out, who were even more beautiful, more good-looking and more

⁴⁵ The term *avalokayan* means more literally 'looking back on', but the purpose is clear.

⁴⁶ Another form of currency, which MMW says is a 'measure of silver'.

⁴⁷ See BHSD entry for *pauruṣeya* for its meaning of 'servant' or, in this and parallel mentions, a type of crewman. As Edgerton notes, only four types are actually named - *āhāra*, *nāvika*, *kaivarta* and *kaṇadhāra* - the roles of which are not clear; my translation is tentative in this regard.

⁴⁸ This feature of the story resonates with the *Valāhassa-jātaka* (*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* 196) and its parallels, in which a caravan of merchants is shipwrecked on an island, seduced by demonesses, and prohibited from going south in case they should discover the iron prison in which previous victims had been incarcerated. For a study of the various versions of this story see Appleton 2006.

charming. They said, 'Come, Maitrakanyaka, you are welcome. Here is our food-house and drink-house, our clothes house and our sleeping house, abounding in various kinds of gems, pearls, cats-eye, conch-shells, crystal, coral, gold and silver. Come, and we will enjoy ourselves.' He experienced pleasure with them for several years, just like a being who has made merit and done good deeds. They too prohibited him from going along the path south, but being forbidden from the southern road only made him want to go there more. So once again he went along that path to the south and saw a palace called Brahmottara (Highest Brahmā). He arrived at the gate, and thirty-two celestial nymphs came out, who were even more beautiful, more good-looking and more charming. They said, 'Come, Maitrakanyaka, you are welcome. Here is our food-house and drink-house, our clothes house and our sleeping house, abounding in various kinds of gems, pearls, cats-eye, conch-shells, crystal, coral, gold and silver. Come, and we will enjoy ourselves.' He experienced pleasure with them for several years, just like a being who has made merit and done good deeds. They too prohibited him from going along the path south, but being forbidden from the southern road only made him want to go there more.

"When he went along that path to the south his wishes came to pass, so yet again he went along the path to the south, and he saw a city made of iron. He went in, and the moment that he had entered the gate closed. Then he went into the inner part, and that gate closed. Then he went further inside and there saw a man of great stature. A wheel made of iron turned on his head, blazing and burning, flaming like a single flame. Pus and blood oozed from his head and this was his food. Maitrakanyaka asked that man, 'O person, who are you?' He replied, 'I am someone who injured his mother.' And the moment that man gave this explanation, Maitrakanyaka's action faced him: 'I too am someone who injured his mother! I think that I have been drawn here in this way because of that action.' At that moment a voice appeared in the sky: 'He who was bound is freed! He who was free is bound!' The moment this was said, the wheel vanished from that person's head and appeared on the head of Maitrakanyaka. Then, observing Maitrakanyaka suffering, that person pronounced this verse:

'Having passed through Ramaṇaka, Sadāmatta and Nandana,
and Brahmottara Palace, why did you come here?'

Maitrakanyaka told him:

'Having passed through Ramaṇaka, Sadāmatta and Nāndana,
and Brahmottara Palace according to my wish, I came here.
For karma drags one a long way, karma continues a long time;
Karma drags one to a place where the karma ripens.
Because of the ripening of karma the wheel is borne on my head,
blazing and flaming, oppressing my life-breath.'

The person said:

'With wicked thoughts you mistreated your mother,
striking her on the head with your foot. This is the fruit of that action.'

Maitrakanyaka said:

'For how many thousands of years will this wheel turn on my head,
blazing and flaming, oppressing my life-breath?'

The person declared:

'For sixty-thousand years and sixty-hundred years
this wheel of blazing iron will revolve on your head.'

Maitrakanyaka said, 'O person, will anyone else also come here?' The man replied, 'Someone who has done this kind of deed.'

"Then Maitrakanyaka, experiencing painful feelings, generated compassion towards these beings and said to the man, 'I wish, O man, for the sake of all beings, to bear this wheel upon my head. Let not anyone else who has done this kind of deed come here!' The moment he said this, the wheel flew up from Maitrakanyaka the Bodhisattva's head to a height of seven palm trees and stayed there in the sky. And having met his time, he arose amongst the gods in the Tuṣita heaven."⁴⁹

The Exalted One said, "What do you think, monks? He who at that time and on that occasion was Maitrakanyaka, that was me. I did business and presented *kārṣāpaṇas* to my mother, and through the ripening of that act of mine I experienced much pleasure in the four great cities. But I slightly injured my mother, and because of the ripening of that act I experienced the suffering of this kind. Therefore, monks, you should train in this way: We will honour our mother and father and not do them injury. Let there be no faults here like those of Maitrakanyaka or of that ordinary man, but only let there be these qualities of the sons of the gods. In this way, monks, you should train. For what reason? Because, monks, a son's parents do difficult things, nourishing and supporting him, cherishing him and giving him milk, showing him the wonderful Jambūdvīpa continent. A son who would carry his mother on one shoulder and his father on the second for a full one hundred years, or who [would give them] the gems, pearls, cats-eye, conch-shells, crystal, coral, silver, gold, emeralds, sapphires,⁵⁰ rubies and right-spiraling conches on this great earth, or who would establish them in majesty and sovereignty and suchlike, even that son would still not have served or benefited his mother and father enough. But someone who introduces his mother and father who are without faith to the riches of faith, educates them in it, bestows it upon them and establishes them in it; or if they are without virtue, introduces virtue to them, educates them in it, bestows it upon them and establishes them in it; or in the riches of generosity if they are mean, or in the riches of wisdom if they are lacking wisdom; that son would have served and benefited his mother and father enough."

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One's speech.

37. The Hare

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. In Śrāvastī was a certain

⁴⁹ In contrast to this version, in the versions of the story in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (numbers 82, 104, 369 and 439) Maitrakanyaka (or, in Pāli, Mittavindaka) is not the Bodhisattva. Rather he is a bad man who meets his comeuppance in a hell realm, and is visited there by a god (=Bodhisattva).

⁵⁰ The exact meaning of *musāragalva* is unclear, with possible meanings including cats-eye gem and coral, as well as sapphire. Since the former two have already appeared in this list I have chosen the latter. See BHSD.

guildsman, who was rich, of great wealth and property. His possessions were broad and extensive, and he was furnished with wealth like Vaiśravaṇa, rivaling Vaiśravaṇa's wealth. He took a wife from a similar family, and he played with her and made love to her and amused himself. After some time of playing, love-making and enjoyment, it happened that a being entered his wife.⁵¹ After eight or nine months she gave birth, and a little boy was born. He grew up to be big and strong. His father lost all his wealth, and his possessions wasted away, and having numerous friends, relations and kinsmen, he sent his son to them from time to time. He was indulged by those relations so that he became very affectionate towards them.

On a certain occasion he set out for the Jeta Grove, and there he saw the Buddha, the Exalted One, adorned with the thirty-two marks of a great man and the eighty minor marks, with splendid limbs and arrayed with light that extended a fathom, radiance in excess of a thousand suns, handsome in his entirety like a living mountain of jewels. He developed faith and honoured the feet of the Exalted One, and sat before him ready to hear the *dharma*. The Exalted One gave a *dharma* talk that created disgust with *saṃsāra*, and hearing this he became one who sees the faults in *saṃsāra* and the qualities in *nirvāṇa*. Having sought permission from his parents he went forth in the dispensation of the Exalted One. But having thus renounced, he dwelled amongst his relations. Then the Exalted One restrained him from contact with householders and directed him to the forest, but that did not please him. Three times the Exalted One restrained him from contact with the householders: 'Dear one, there are many faults and offences in associating with householders. There are forms that are perceived by the eyes as lovely, desirable, beloved, dear, agreeable, conducive to pleasure, and delightful, sounds perceived by the ear, smells perceived by the nose, flavours perceived by the tongue, contacts perceived by the body, and *dharma*s perceived by the mind as lovely, desirable, beloved, dear, agreeable, conducive to pleasure, and delightful, but that are really like thorns.' And he praised in many ways the qualities of the forest, in which, for one established there, skillful *dharma*s increase. At last that son of a good family came to the Exalted One, his skillful friend, and took up residence in the forest. And by applying himself, striving and exerting, he understood that this fivefold wheel of rebirth is in constant motion. Having rejected all conditioned things as being characterised by decay, decline, destruction and ruin, through destroying all the defilements he achieved the state of arhatship. Having become an *arhat* he was free from passions in the threefold universe. He considered mud and gold to be the same, thought the sky to be the same as the palm of his hand, and was indifferent alike to an axe or sandalwood. Having attained knowledge (*vidyā*), supernormal knowledges (*abhijñā*) and special knowledges (*pratisamvid*), he turned away from the benefits of longing to attain worldly existence. He became worthy of honour, devotion and salutation for the gods including Indra and his younger brother.⁵² He recalled his former lives and saw the incredibly difficult feats of the Exalted One. He approached the Exalted One and respectfully praised and honoured him.

⁵¹ In other words she conceived, which requires, as we learnt in an earlier story, that a *gandharva* is standing by ready to take a rebirth.

⁵² *sendropendrāṇām*. Upendra is often used to refer to Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu. The presence of a plural rather than dual form is not unusual in Buddhist Sanskrit.

The monks became doubtful, and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, remover of all doubts: "See, sir, how this son of a good family was three times restrained by the Exalted One from interaction with householders and directed to the forest, and there was established in arhatship." The Exalted One said, "O monks, what is the wonder in this now, if through me, who has eradicated attachment, hatred and delusion, who is free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, and is all-knowing, knowledgeable in all ways, master of all that is to be known, this son of a good family was three times restrained from interaction with householders and directed to the forest, and was there established in arhatship? In times past, when I was affected by attachment, hatred and delusion, and was not free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, this son of a noble family was restrained from contact with householders and directed to the forest because of me sacrificing my own life. Listen, monks. Focus your minds on the good and the right and I will explain."

"Formerly, monks, in times past, in a certain mountain cave that was furnished with springs, flowers and fruits, lived a sage engaged in severe austerities, consuming fruits, roots and water, wearing deerskin and bark-cloth, and conducting fire sacrifices. And this sage was friends with a hare that had a human voice. Three times every day it came near to that sage, and having approached, it offered salutation, and then carried on a conversation with a variety of talk. The two of them continued in strong affection, like a father and son, until after some time a great drought came to pass, such that the rivers and wells had little water, and the trees were deprived of flowers and fruits. Then that sage in his hermitage was unhappy due to the lack of food. He began to throw off his deerskin and barkcloth.

"Then, seeing what was happening, the hare asked him, 'Great sage, where are you going?' The sage replied, 'I am going to a village. There I will subsist on cooked food.' Hearing the sage's words he became upset, thinking himself like one separated from his mother and father. Falling at the sage's feet he said, 'Don't abandon me! Household-dwelling is fraught with many faults, while forest-dwelling is abounding in good qualities!' But despite speaking like this many times, he could not dissuade him. So then the hare said, 'If you are determined to go then please wait for just one day. Tomorrow you may go as you please.' Then this occurred to the sage: 'Surely he wishes to offer me some food, for these beings who are in the form of animals keep a hoard.' So he consented.

"Then when the daily observances were done and it was time for food, the hare approached and circumambulated that sage and then began to ask pardon: 'Forgive me, great sage, if I – arisen in an animal form and deprived of reason and comprehension – have committed any fault towards you.' Having said this he suddenly sprung forth and landed in the fire. The sage was shocked, and with his face clouded with tears he pulled him to his chest as if he was his dear only son and said, 'Dear one, what is this you are doing?' The hare replied, 'Great sage, out of love for the forest you can subsist for a day and a night on my own meat.' And:

'There is nothing in the forest for this full-grown hare:

no beans, no sesame, no rice.

But you should today make use of this, my body,

consecrated in the fire, and live in the forest of austerities.'

Then the sage, having heard the hare's words, experienced profound shock (*samvega*) and said, 'If this is so, out of affection for you I will willingly give up my

life right here, and not go down to the village outskirts!’ Hearing these words the hare was delighted, and with his face upturned he gazed at the sky and made this entreaty. He said:

‘Having come to the forest my heart delights in solitude!

By this statement of truth may the god rain down the rains of Great Indra!’

The moment he said this, through the power of the Bodhisattva the abode of Great Indra shook, and the gods became aware of what was going on below, saying ‘What has happened?’ It is said that they saw because of the power of the Bodhisattva. Because of Śakra the king of the gods, the rains of Great Indra rained down, so that the hermitage was once again filled with an abundance of grass, shrubs, herbs, flowers and fruits.

“Then that sage approached the hare as a spiritual friend, and living there he realised the five superknowledges. The sage said to the hare, ‘Friend hare, what do you wish for from this very difficult undertaking and your cultivation of compassion?’ He said, ‘To be a Buddha in this dark world that is leaderless and lacking a guide, to carry across those beings who have not crossed over, liberate those who are not liberated, console those in need of consolation, bring to complete *nirvāṇa* those who have not entered complete *nirvāṇa*.’ Then that sage, having heard these words, said to the hare, ‘When you become a Buddha, may you take notice of me again.’ The hare said, ‘Let it be so.’”⁵³

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? He who was at that time and on that occasion the hare, that was me, and that sage was this son of a good family. In this way, monks, you should train: We will dwell as good friends, good companions, good associates, not evil friends, evil companions, evil associates. In this way, monks, you should train.”

Then Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, “Sir, when I am here alone and solitary in retreat, this thought arises in my mind, that this is half of the religious life,⁵⁴ namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations.” The Exalted One said, “You should not say this, Ānanda, that this is half of the religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations. Ānanda, this is the entire, complete, whole, pure, accomplished religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations. What is the reason for this? Because, Ānanda, beings who are subject to the experience of rebirth come to me as their spiritual friend and are liberated from the experience of rebirth, and those beings who experience ageing, sickness, grief, death, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish are freed from mental anguish [etc]. In this manner, Ānanda, it should be understood, that this is the entire, complete, whole, pure, accomplished religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and

⁵³ While a story of a hare sacrificing his life is also known in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (316. *Sasa-jātaka*) and the *Jātakamālā* (6. *Śaśa*), in these versions the story is rather different: the Bodhisattva hare offers himself as a meal to a brahmin (Śakra in disguise) as an act of hospitality, and is rewarded by having his form marked on the moon.

⁵⁴ The term here is *brahmacariya*, often translated as ‘Brahma-faring’. This usually has overtones of celibacy or adherence to monastic ideals.

good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations. In this way, monks, you should train.”⁵⁵

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and Ānanda and the other monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

38. The Dharma-seeker

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. It was the householder Anāthapiṇḍada’s habit that, having risen at dawn and approached in order to see the Exalted One, he cleaned the Jeta Grove himself. But one time the householder Anāthapiṇḍada was delayed, and the Exalted One, in order to show a meritorious path to those beings who desired merit, took up the broom himself and began to clean the Jeta Grove. Having seen the Exalted One, the great disciples – Śāradvatīputra, Maudgalyāyana, Kāśyapa, Nanda, Revata and so on – also began to clean. Then, having cleaned the Jeta Grove along with his disciples, he entered the meeting hall and sat in front of the community of monks on the seat that had been prepared. Having sat down, the Exalted One addressed the monks: “There are these five benefits, monks, in cleaning. What five? One purifies one’s own mind, one purifies another’s mind, one becomes attractive to the minds of the gods, one accumulates suitable roots of skillful action, and at the break up of the body one arises in a good destiny, a heaven realm, amongst the gods. These are the five benefits of cleaning.”

Then the four assemblies,⁵⁶ having heard the five benefits of cleaning in the presence of the Exalted One, became faithful, their minds pleased, joyful and happy, and getting up from their seats they raised their hands respectfully towards the Exalted One. They said this to the Exalted One: “Exalted One, as the Exalted One’s servants we wish to always clean the whole Jeta Grove. Grant us this favour.” The Exalted One consented to them through his silence, and so the four assemblies, knowing that the Exalted One had consented, took up brooms and began to sweep the whole of the Jeta Grove. And when they had swept the whole of the Jeta Grove as far as the grove road, they sat a little way from the Exalted One in order to hear a *dharma* teaching, and listened with respect.

The householder Anāthapiṇḍada returned to that region, and he heard that the Exalted One himself, along with his great disciples, had cleaned the Jeta Grove. Having heard the Exalted One’s teaching on the five benefits of cleaning, he was full of regret and reflected thus: “Oh why have I done this? It is in this monastery of the Exalted One, a field of merit in which a seed planted today produces fruit today also, endless fruit produced even from a small seed; this extremely pleasant ground where all the disciples live together in the presence of

⁵⁵ For a parallel to this exchange between the Buddha and Ānanda see *Samyutta Nikāya* 3.18 and 45.2 (Bodhi (trans.) 2000: 180-1 and 1524-5). It is also repeated in story 40 below.

⁵⁶ This presumably refers to the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, though another possibility is that it refers to four individuals amongst the assembly.

the Tathāgata; which is a place of happiness for all the gods, *asuras*, humans, *gandharvas*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas*, and has no place for all the malicious beings, *bhūtas*, *pretas*, *piśācas*, *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas* and hell-beings; an abode that has no place for Māra or any of Māra's assembly, whether they are deities or humans; in which oppression is routed;⁵⁷ in which the occurrence of greed, hatred, delusion, selfishness, envy, pride and wickedness amongst beings is unknown; which is not frequented by those of evil conduct and is unattractive to those under the influence of bad friends; a place which is neither seen nor thought of by those who are faithless or devoid of *dharma* and liberality; which does not cross the mind of those of bad conduct and inappropriate living; a refuge that is not obtained by those lacking in compassion, the angry, or harsh-speakers; which is far away for those who are apathetic or of little vigour, or who are restless and give up on their undertakings; which is a place of darkness for those lacking in meditative attainments and whose memories are obscured, and for those who live according to a wrong view, and those who are established on a wrong path; which is not arrived at or obtained by those who have wrong understanding or other faulty opinions and knowledge; which is extremely pleasing to the generous and a place of great delight for those intent on moral conduct; which is approached respectfully and obtained by those living with patience; which is arrived at and gained by those who are always vigorous in their undertakings; a place for those who love meditation to abide; which is a field never lacking in understanding and clarity for those who maintain wisdom; it is in this type of monastery, that is a plaything for the Buddha, that I have thrown away my intention to clean! But I will never do this again!" Having resolved on that, this occurred to him: "When the Exalted One, along with his great disciples, did the cleaning himself, how can I approach him?" So Anāthapiṇḍada stood there, visibly embarrassed, his heart afflicted by shame.

Exalted Ones, Buddhas, though knowing [the answers], ask questions, and so he asked the monks, "What is going on?" The monks replied, "Sir, Anāthapiṇḍada, embarrassed in mind and body and with his heart afflicted by shame, does not wish to approach, to even place a foot down here, in the vicinity of the Exalted One, precisely because the Exalted One, together with his great disciples, cleaned the Jeta Grove himself." Then the Exalted One said, "The householder should be brought here to hear⁵⁸ the words of the Buddha. Why? Because Exalted Ones, Buddhas, regard the true *dharma* as venerable, for the *dharma* is venerable to *arhats*." Then Anāthapiṇḍada, at the singing of this verse approached the place where the Exalted One was. Having approached he worshipped the feet of the Exalted One and sat down before him, a little way apart, in order to hear a *dharma* talk. Then the Exalted One taught, inspired, incited and pleased him with a *dharma* talk. In many ways the Exalted One proceeded to teach, inspire, incite and please him with a *dharma* talk.

Then the monks became doubtful and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, destroyer of all doubts: "It is a marvel, sir, that the Exalted One, being respectful of and reverential towards the *dharma*, should speak in praise of the *dharma* like this. See, sir, how these beings have become vessels for the jewel of the *dharma*, such that they have reverently set about cleaning all of the Jeta

⁵⁷ The term *bhagnābhibhavajāte* could be interpreted in a variety of ways, with *abhibhava* carrying a range of meanings surrounding oppression, mastery, humiliation and so on.

⁵⁸ Following Speyer's reconstruction (1958: 217 n. 2).

Grove, and they regard the *dharma* as worthy of hearing.” The Exalted One said, “What is the marvel in this now, monks, if the Tathāgata, who has destroyed greed, hatred and delusion, and is completely free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, should be respectful of and reverential towards the *dharma* and speak in praise of the *dharma*. For in times past, when I was affected by greed, hatred and delusion, and was not free from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, sacrificed even my own life for the sake of the *dharma*. Listen, focus your minds on the good and the right, and I will explain.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past, a king named Brahmadata ruled his kingdom in the city of Vārāṇasī. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. And that king was faithful and good, of virtuous intentions, dedicated to the good of others as well as his own benefit, compassionate, great-hearted, devoted to the *dharma*, affectionate towards his family, and a giver of great gifts, being generous with everything, renouncing everything, giving up without attachment. On a certain occasion he played with his wife, made love to her and amused himself with her. And after some time, from that play and love-making and amusement, that queen became pregnant. She had a pregnancy craving:⁵⁹ ‘I would listen to a good speech!’ She told the king, and the king summoned soothsayers and questioned them. They said, ‘Your majesty, this is a consequence of the being [who has descended into her womb].’ So the king, in order to get a good speaker, had a golden casket travel through villages, cities, towns, districts, and the capital, but no good speaker could be found. Meanwhile, after nine months had passed she gave birth. A boy was born who was well-formed, beautiful, pleasing, brilliant, golden-coloured, with a parasol-shaped head, pendulous arms, a broad forehead, a loud voice, eyebrows that joined, a prominent nose, and furnished with all the major and subsidiary limbs. When he was born they celebrated his birth-festival and fixed the naming ceremony. ‘What should be this boy’s name?’ The courtiers said, ‘Because this boy desired good speech (*subhāṣitaṃ gaveṣate*) even before his birth, the boy’s name should be Subhāṣitagaveṣi (Desirous of good speech).’⁶⁰ And so he was named Subhāṣitagaveṣi. The child Subhāṣitagaveṣi was given eight nurses: two shoulder-nurses, two wet-nurses, two nurses to play with and two nurses to keep him clean. He was raised by these eight nurses, nourished with milk, coagulated milk, fresh butter, clarified butter, clarified butter extract, and served with various other hot foods. He grew quickly, like a lotus in a lake. And when in due course he had grown up, even then he desired good speech and did not get it.

“When his father passed away, he was established in the kingship. He commanded his courtiers: ‘Chiefs, my purpose is good speech. I desire good speech.’ Those courtiers paraded the golden casket through the whole of Jambūdvīpa for the sake of good speech, but they did not find good speech. They

⁵⁹ The *dohada*, or pregnancy craving, is a common motif in Indian narrative. The experiences of the mother during pregnancy are intimately related to the character and karmic inheritance of the child she is carrying.

⁶⁰ The implication would appear to be that *subhāṣita* is here equivalent to *dharma*, hence the title of this story: Dharmagaveṣi.

reported this to the king. The king was tormented with longing on account of wishing to hear good speech.

“It happened that Śakra, king of the gods, saw and knew what was going on below. He saw the king frustrated in his efforts to hear good speech, and it occurred to him, ‘What if I were to test this king?’ So Śakra the king of the gods took on the form of a *guhyaka*, altering his hands, feet and eyes, and spoke this verse before the king:

‘One should live the *dharma*, behaving well; one should not behave badly.

One who lives according to the *dharma* is happy in this world and the next.’

Then the king, gazing at him with eyes wide in amazement, said to the *guhyaka*, ‘Speak, speak to me, *guhyaka*! I would hear these verses!’ Then the *guhyaka* said to the king, ‘If I am to speak thus, you should do something for me, just as I am going to do as you command.’ The king said, ‘What do you command?’ The *guhyaka* replied, ‘If, having burned a fire in the stove with acacia wood for seven days and nights, you cast yourself in there, then I will speak another verse for you.’ Hearing that the king was delighted and said to that *guhyaka*, ‘Let it be so.’ Then the king, having made this promise to the *guhyaka*, had it proclaimed with gongs throughout his realm: ‘In seven days the king, in order to hear good speech, will cast himself into the oven. Whoever wishes to see wonders should come!’

“Then several hundred thousand beings assembled, and several hundred thousand deities assembled in the sky, and having approached because of the pure resolve of the Bodhisattva, they remained there to see the marvel.⁶¹ Then the *guhyaka* flew up into the sky and said to the Bodhisattva, ‘Great king, you should do what you agreed.’ The king consecrated his eldest son in the kingship, asked pardon of his courtiers and the city and country folk, and comforted the people in general. Having come close to that oven, he spoke this verse:

‘This charcoal oven, terrifying like the red blazing sun,

I hasten towards for the sake of *dharma*, without hesitation or fear for my life.

And this fiery oven will become, through the power of my virtuous merit,

a cool lotus pool filled with lotuses, its water perfumed with sandal-paste.’

Having said this, the Bodhisattva fell into the fiery oven, and at the moment that he fell into it, the fiery oven appeared as a lotus pool. Then Śakra the king of the gods, seeing this great wonder, that marvel that humbled gods and men, cast off his appearance as a *yakṣa* and, standing in his own form, spoke the verse:

‘One should live the *dharma*, behaving well; one should not behave badly.

One who lives according to the *dharma* is happy in this world and the next.’

Then the Bodhisattva took up that verse and had it written on a golden plate and circulated through the villages, cities, towns, countries and capital cities in the whole of Jambudvīpa.”

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? He who at that time and on that occasion was the king, that was me. Even then for the sake of hearing good speech I gave up my own life, how much more so now. Therefore in this way you should train, monks: We will honour, praise, respect and worship the *dharma*, and having honoured, praised, respected and worshipped the *dharma* we will live in reliance upon it. In this way, monks, you should train.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

⁶¹ On the problematic nature of this sentence see Speyer 1958: 221 n. 4.

39. Anāthapiṇḍada

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Śrāvastī in the Jeta Grove, the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada. Now the Exalted One in the morning got dressed, and taking his robe and bowl entered Śrāvastī for alms, and wandering in due course he went down the royal road. And there on the royal road a certain brahmin approached, and he saw the Buddha, the Exalted One adorned with the thirty-two marks of a great man and the eighty minor marks, with splendid limbs and arrayed with light that extended a fathom, radiance in excess of a thousand suns, handsome in his entirety like a living mountain of jewels. Having seen him he gazed at him for a long time and then drew a line in the earth and said to the Exalted One, “O Gautama, you may not cross this line without giving me five-hundred *purāṇas*.” Then the Exalted One, in order to demonstrate the consequences of actions, and in order to abstain from taking what is not given, remained on that spot like a threshold stone.⁶²

This sound spread throughout Śrāvastī – that apparently the Exalted One had been detained by a brahmin on the royal road asking for five hundred *purāṇas*. Then King Prasenajit the Kośalan heard this and, with his entourage of courtiers, went to where the Exalted One was. Having approached he said this to the Exalted One: “Go, Exalted One! I will make the payment.” The Exalted One said, “No, great king, it is not for you to pay, it is for another to pay.” Then Viśākhā the mother of Mṛgāra,⁶³ the officials Ṛṣidatta and Purāṇa,⁶⁴ the gods Śakra and Brahmā and so on, and the four world-guardians beginning with Vaiśravaṇa, took gold and coins and approached the Exalted One. But the Exalted One said to them too, “It should not be paid by these honourable ones.” Then the householder Anāthapiṇḍada heard about it, and filling baskets with gold and coins and taking an additional five hundred *purāṇas* he approached the Exalted One: “Exalted One, accept this.” The Exalted One replied, “Householder, you should pay this. Give it to the brahmin.” And so the householder Anāthapiṇḍada gave the basket of gold to the brahmin.

The monks became doubtful, as did the assembled company and the king, and they questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, the remover of all doubts: “See, Exalted One, how this brahmin detained the Exalted One and Anāthapiṇḍada gave him *kārṣāṇas*. How did it come about that he could obstruct the Exalted One?” The Exalted One said, “Do you wish to hear about it, monks?” “Indeed, sir.” “Then listen, monks, concentrate your minds on the good and the right, and I will explain. O monks, in other previous births the Tathāgata performed and accumulated these actions, which became inevitable. Who else will experience their results? O monks, deeds done do not mature in the earth element, nor in the

⁶² An *indrakīla* is a post or stone used to mark a threshold. The implications are of strength and motionlessness. See BHSD.

⁶³ Viśākhā was the foremost laywoman in the Buddha’s time, and lived in Śrāvastī. See DPPN entry for ‘5. Viśākhā’ for an explanation for why she is referred to as the mother of Mṛgāra.

⁶⁴ These two officers (*sthapatī*) of Prasenajit are always mentioned together. See DPPN ‘2. Isidatta’ for an account of their interactions with the Buddha.

water element, nor in the fire element, nor in the wind element. Rather, deeds done, whether pure or impure, ripen in what is enumerated as the aggregates, the physical elements and the elements of sense-experience.”

“Actions do not disappear even after a hundred billion aeons.

When they have reached completion and it is time, they fruit for living beings.”⁶⁵

“Formerly, monks, in times past, a king named Brahmadatta ruled his kingdom in the city of Vārāṇasī. He ruled the kingdom as if it was his only son, and it was wealthy, thriving, prosperous, abundant in food, and filled with a great many people. Fatigue, quarrels, riots and frays were appeased, thieves and sickness were gone, and it had plentiful rice, food, cows and buffaloes. It was completely free from troubles. His eldest son was the crown prince, and on a certain occasion during spring, when the trees were blossoming and it was resounding with the cries of geese, cranes, peacocks, parrots, mynahs, cuckoos and pheasants, he sported and played in a wooded park, with a retinue of courtiers’ sons. One of his friends, the son of a courtier, played a game of dice with another man. That courtier’s son lost five hundred *purāṇas* to the other man, and the king’s son provided surety for the debt. [...]”⁶⁶ Thus during my transmigration I experienced endless misfortunes concerning my wealth, and even now my completely awakened buddhahood is oppressed by him. For thus, monks, entirely black deeds have entirely black fruits, entirely white deeds have entirely white fruits, and mixed deeds have mixed fruits. Therefore, monks, having cast aside black deeds and those that are mixed, one should direct oneself to performing deeds that are wholly white. And one should strive to avoid taking what is not given, as were the kind of faults he had.”⁶⁷ In this way, O monks, you should train.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

40. Subhadra

The Buddha, the Exalted One, honoured by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – that is to say honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by kings, regents, the wealthy, the city-dwellers, bankers, caravan leaders, gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras* and *mahoragas* – and who was knowing and of great merit, dwelled with his community of disciples, provided with the requisite robes, almsbowls, beds, seats, and medicines for the sick, in Kuśinagarī, in the country of the Mallas, in the grove of the twin *śāla* trees. At the time of the Exalted One’s *parinirvāṇa* he addressed Venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, prepare a raised couch for the Tathāgata, between the twin *śāla* trees, with its head facing north. Today, in the middle watch of the night, the Tathāgata will

⁶⁵ Compare the similar passage in story 31, where it is more developed, in common with occurrences elsewhere in the text. The verse here has an extra word – *koṭi*, which I have translated as ‘billion’.

⁶⁶ A part of the story is missing here, in Speyer’s Sanskrit manuscripts and in the Tibetan. See Speyer 1958: 225-6. The missing text must specify, one assumes, that the Buddha was this prince who gave surety for the debt but never paid it, that Anāthapiṇḍada was the friend who lost the game, and that the brahmin was the other man. Indeed, this series of identifications is given in one of Speyer’s manuscripts (1958: 226 n.1) as well as in Feer’s text (1979: 150) though in both cases somewhat later than one might expect.

⁶⁷ It is not clear whether ‘he’ refers to the prince (the Bodhisattva) or his friend (the past life of Anāthapiṇḍada).

become completely extinguished, in the *nirvāṇa* element that is without remainder.”⁶⁸ “Yes, sir,” replied the venerable Ānanda to the Exalted One, and he prepared a raised couch between the two *śāla* trees with its head facing north, and then approached the Exalted One. Having approached he honoured the Exalted One’s feet with his head and stood to one side. Standing to one side, Venerable Ānanda said this to the Exalted One: “Sir, the raised couch, between the two *śāla* trees and with its head pointing north, is ready for the Tathāgata.” Then the Exalted One approached that couch, and having approached it he lay down on his right side, placing one foot on the other, conscious of the world,⁶⁹ mindful and fully aware, and turned his mind to consideration of *nirvāṇa*.

At that time the wandering mendicant (*parivrājaka*) Subhadra was living in Kuśinagarī, and he was of advancing years, old and frail.⁷⁰ He, being one hundred and twenty years old, was honoured, praised, respected and worshipped by the Mallas who lived in Kuśinagarī, and he was believed to be an *arhat*. The mendicant Subhadra heard that in the middle watch of the night the *śramaṇa* Gautama was going to become completely extinguished in the *nirvāṇa* element that is without remainder. He thought, “I have doubt regarding the *dharma*s, and expectation still abides in me. This Exalted One Gautama has the power to dispel that doubt of mine.” So having heard this he left Kuśinagarī and went to that grove of the twin *śāla* trees.

At that time Venerable Ānanda was walking on the walkway in the open air outside the monastery, and the mendicant Subhadra saw Venerable Ānanda. Having seen him from afar, he approached Venerable Ānanda, and having approached he exchanged various suitably friendly and pleasant greetings with Venerable Ānanda, and then stood to one side. Standing to one side Subhadra the mendicant said to Venerable Ānanda, “O Ānanda, I heard that today, in the middle watch of the night, the *śramaṇa* Gautama going to become completely extinguished in the *nirvāṇa* element that is without remainder. I have doubt regarding the *dharma*s, and expectation still abides in me. This Exalted One Gautama has the power to dispel that doubt of mine. Ānanda, if it is not troublesome to the Exalted One,⁷¹ I would enter and question him on a certain matter, if you would allow me in for an answer to my question.” Ānanda replied, “Enough, Subhadra. Do not trouble the Exalted One. The Exalted One is tired of body; the Well-farer is exhausted of body.” A second and a third time the mendicant Subhadra said this to Venerable Ānanda: “O Ānanda, I heard that today, in the middle watch of the night, the *śramaṇa* Gautama is going to become completely extinguished in the *nirvāṇa* element that is without remainder. I have doubt regarding the *dharma*s, and expectation still abides in me. This Exalted One Gautama has the power to dispel that doubt of mine. Ānanda, if it is not troublesome to the Exalted One, I would enter and question him on a certain

⁶⁸ The phrase *nirupadhiśeṣe nirvāṇadhātau parinirvāṇaṃ bhaviṣyati* is tricky to render. In English translations we often talk of someone ‘entering *nirvāṇa*’, though it might be closer syntactically to speak of someone ‘*nirvāṇising*’, or, here, ‘becoming completely *nirvāṇised*’.

⁶⁹ As Speyer notes (1958: 228 n. 1) it is difficult to surmise what *ālokaṣaṃjño* might mean. Vaidya’s reading *alokaṣaṃjño* is no better. I have followed Speyer’s suggested emendation to *lokaṣaṃjñi*.

⁷⁰ The story of Subhadra’s initiation as the last of the Buddha’s personal disciples is familiar from other stories of the Buddha’s last days. Compare the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 16); Walshe (trans.) 1995: 267-9. No past-life stories are told in that account.

⁷¹ Following Speyer’s conjecture (1958: 229 n. 2) that *bhavata* should be *bhagavata*, and thus refer to the Buddha rather than to Ānanda. This applies also to the repetition that follows.

matter, if you would allow me in for an answer to my question.” But a second and a third time Venerable Ānanda said this to the mendicant Subhadra: “Enough, Subhadra. Do not trouble the Tathāgata. The Exalted One is tired of body; the Well-farer is exhausted of body.” Then Subhadra the mendicant said to Venerable Ānanda: “O Ānanda, I have heard from the elderly mendicants of old, from *buddhas* and great wandering teachers,⁷² that *tathāgatas*, *arhats*, perfectly awakened *buddhas*, arise in the world as rarely as the *udumbara* flower.⁷³ And today in the middle watch of the night, the Exalted One Gautama is going to become completely extinguished in the *nirvāṇa* element that is without remainder. I have doubt regarding the *dharma*s, and expectation still abides in me. This Exalted One Gautama has the power to dispel that doubt of mine. Ānanda, if it is not troublesome to the Exalted One, I would enter and question him on a certain matter, if you would allow me in for an answer to my question.” But again Venerable Ānanda said to Subhadra the mendicant: “Enough, Subhadra. Do not trouble the Tathāgata. The Exalted One is tired of body; the Well-farer is exhausted of body.”

Then the Exalted One heard, with his purified divine ear that surpassed human power, Venerable Ānanda’s problematic conversation with the mendicant Subhadra. Having heard it, he said to Venerable Ānanda, “Enough, Ānanda. Do not restrain the mendicant Subhadra. Let him enter and question me as he wishes to. This will be the final conversation I have with mendicants from another sect, and this – namely the mendicant Subhadra – will be the last of the followers I call forth in person by saying ‘Come, monk!’” Then the mendicant Subhadra, having been granted permission by the Exalted One, was pleased, happy and delighted, and having become intensely joyful and contented he approached the Exalted One. And having approached he exchanged various suitably friendly and pleasant greetings with the Exalted One, and then sat to one side. Seated to one side Subhadra the mendicant said this to the Exalted One: “O Gautama, there are these various sectarian teachers⁷⁴ in the world, namely Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, Māskarī Gośālīputra, Sañjayī Vairūṭīputra, Ajita Keśakambala, Kakuda Kātyāyana and Nirgrantha Jñātaputra. Explain to me each of their teachings.”⁷⁵

So at that time the Exalted One spoke these verses:

“Subhadra, I was twenty-nine years old,
when I went forth in search of the good.
More than fifty years have passed,
since I went forth, Subhadra.
Good conduct, meditative practice and wisdom,
and one-pointedness of mind were cultivated by me,

⁷² This is just one of several possible readings of *purāṇāṃ parivrājakānām antikāḥ jīrṇānām buddhānām mahatām caraṇācāryānām*. The meaning, however, is clear: all the best teachers know that the opportunity to meet a full and perfect Buddha is rare indeed.

⁷³ *Ficus Glomerata* or *Ficus Racemosa*. The flowers cannot be seen as they are within the fruit. A legend therefore emerged that the tree only flowers extremely rarely.

⁷⁴ This is a rather loose translation of *tīrthyāyatanaṇi*, but the meaning is clear. The term *tīrthika* (Pāli *titthiya*) is often translated as ‘heretic’, as it is usually used in a disparaging sense to refer to rival schools or sects. However, the use of the term with the prefix *anya-* (‘other’) as in the Buddha’s speech to Ānanda above (or also, elsewhere, with *para-*), implies that a Buddhist is also a *tīrthika*. It is therefore perhaps best to talk of different ‘schools’ or ‘sects’ rather than ‘heretical groups’, which in any case is a theologically loaded term.

⁷⁵ Speyer suggests (1958: 231 n.8) that some of the prose is missing here, such that we do not have the full exchange.

and I spoke the way of the noble *dharma*;
There is no other *śramaṇa* outside this.”⁷⁶

“Subhadra, in whatever *dharma* and discipline the eightfold path of the noble ones is not found, there is found no first [type of] *śramaṇa*, and nor is a second, third or fourth [type of] *śramaṇa* found there.⁷⁷ But, Subhadra, in a *dharma* and discipline in which the eightfold path of the noble ones is found, the first [type of] *śramaṇa* is found there, and *śramaṇas* of the second, third and fourth [type] are found there. Subhadra, in this *dharma* and discipline here in which the eightfold path of the noble ones is found, the first [type of] *śramaṇa* is found, and here the second, here the third, and here the fourth. There are no *śramaṇas* or brahmins outside this, and false teachings are empty, whether by *śramaṇas* or brahmins. Thus I roar forth with my accomplished lion’s roar in this assembly!”

Now while he was speaking about this way of the *dharma*, the *dharma*-eye that is pure and free from dust arose for the mendicant Subhadra with regard to the *dharma*s. Then the mendicant Subhadra, having seen *dharma*s, obtained *dharma*s, penetrated *dharma*s, crossed over his desires and passed beyond doubt, no longer dependent on others or led by others, fully confident in regard to the *dharma*s taught by the Teacher. He got up from his seat, placed his upper robe over his shoulder, and, raising his hands in respect towards Venerable Ānanda, he said to Venerable Ānanda, “Sir, Ānanda has obtained a great gain, in that Ānanda has been consecrated as the pupil of a great teacher, by the great teacher, the Exalted One. But we too would obtain that great gain, we would take the going forth into the well-proclaimed *dharma* and discipline and become ordained as a monk.” So Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, “Sir, this mendicant Subhadra wishes to go forth into the well-proclaimed *dharma* and discipline and become ordained as a monk.” The Exalted One addressed the mendicant Subhadra: “Come, monk. Live the religious life.” And he went forth under that venerable one,⁷⁸ and ordained, becoming a monk.

Having gone forth like this, the venerable one roamed about withdrawn and solitary, mindful, zealous, and exerting himself. In order to live alone, withdrawn, mindful, zealous and exerting oneself, noble sons remove their hair and beards, clothe themselves in ochre robes and with complete faith go forth from their homes into homelessness. He saw the perfect ideal of unsurpassed religious life, realized and obtained knowledge of the *dharma* himself, and declared: “Birth is destroyed for me! I have lived the holy life and done what needed to be done. I know I have no further rebirth.” He became possessed of perfect knowledge, venerable, an *arhat*, completely liberated. Then this occurred to the venerable Subhadra who had obtained arhatship and recognized the happiness of liberation: “It is not proper that I should see the Teacher enter complete *nirvāṇa*. So I will enter complete *nirvāṇa* first.” And so Venerable Subhadra achieved complete *nirvāṇa* first of all, and after him the Exalted One.

When Subhadra was established in arhatship by the Exalted One, who had come to his last resting place, during the time when painful feelings were

⁷⁶ For the metrical and other problems with these verses see Speyer 1958: 231-2. Compare the parallel verses in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (*Dīgha Nikāya* 16).

⁷⁷ Presumably this is a reference to the stream-enterer, once-returner, non-returner and *arhat*.

⁷⁸ The use of *āyusman* (‘venerable’, ‘long-lived’) here and in the next sentence is odd, since it is usually used in reference to Ānanda. Perhaps the text is implying that after being called forth by the Buddha himself, Subhadra took formal initiation from Ānanda. Quite why Subhadra is then referred to as *āyusman* himself is even harder to explain, though he is of course long-lived.

impeding his *dharma*, when his *dharma*s were being cut through⁷⁹ and he was being freed from bonds, and when many Mallas of Kuśinagarī were directed to the *dharma*, at that time the monks became doubtful and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, remover of all doubts: “It is a wonder, sir, that the Exalted One freed this mendicant Subhadra from the net of *saṃsāra* and established him in the endless state of *nirvāṇa*, even when his *dharma*s were being cut through and he was being freed from bonds.” The Exalted One said, “What is the marvel in this now, monks, when I have made an end of greed, hatred and delusion, and am completely freed from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, that I have freed the mendicant Subhadra from the net of *saṃsāra* and established him in the endless state of *nirvāṇa*? In times past, when I experienced greed, hatred and delusion, and was not freed from birth, ageing, sickness, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish, and was deprived of reason and comprehension having arisen in an animal birth, I saved Subhadra and the Mallas of Kuśinagarī by giving up my own life. Listen, fix your minds on the good and the right, and I will explain.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past, in a certain mountain cave lived the head of a herd of deer, surrounded by many thousands of deer. He was wise, learned and astute. Having investigated that herd of deer a hunter made it known to the king, and then went out with the king and his four-limbed army and surrounded the whole herd of deer. Then it occurred to the leader of the herd, ‘If I do not protect them now, this very day they will all come to nothing.’ So that leader of the herd began to examine all sides: ‘In which direction may this family of deer find refuge?’ And he saw in that mountain cave a river going along, and that river had a swift current that could carry away a mountain.⁸⁰ And those deer were weak, so the leader of the herd at once entered that river and stood in the middle, and shouted out: ‘Come, sirs! Jump up from this bank, place your feet on my back and stand firm on the other shore. By this means I foresee you have life; otherwise it is death!’ Those deer did so, and because of their hooves falling on his back his skin was cut, so that he appeared like a heap of flesh, blood and bones. But he did not give up his resolve, remaining compassionate towards those deer. When they had all crossed over from his back he began to look: ‘Let there be nobody else who has not crossed over.’ He saw a young deer who had not crossed, and so that leader of the deer, though his body was being cut up and he was being freed from bonds,⁸¹ not caring about his own dear life, he crossed to the bank, mounted the young deer on his back, crossed the river and placed him on the shore. Seeing that the herd of deer had crossed, at the moment of his death he made an aspiration: ‘Just as I have made a gift of my own dear life for these deer and this young deer, and saved them from disaster, in the same way may I in a future time, when I have attained unsurpassed perfect and full awakening, liberate them from the net of *saṃsāra*.’”

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? He who at that time and on that occasion was the leader of the deer, that was me. The Mallas of Kuśinagarī were these deer, and this Subhadra was the young deer.”

⁷⁹ In this passage, *dharma* is being used in the sense of elements, bodily and mental. So the Buddha’s body is afflicted by pain, not his teaching, and the factors that make up the Buddha are being cut off as he enters *parinirvāṇa*.

⁸⁰ For this translation of *ahāryahārīṇīm* see BHSD p. 85-6.

⁸¹ Instead of the *chidyamāṇeṣu dharmeṣu mucyamānāsu saṃghīṣu* as found earlier in relation to the Buddha, here we have *marmāṣu* (‘mortal parts, vulnerable bits of the body’) in place of *dharmeṣu*.

The monks became doubtful and questioned the Exalted One, the Buddha, the remover of all doubt: “What actions had Subhadra done in order to be the last personal disciple?” The Exalted One said, “In other former births, monks, Subhadra performed and accumulated actions.⁸² These do not ripen in the earth element, nor in the water element, nor in the fire element, nor in the wind element. Rather, deeds done, whether pure or impure, ripen in what are enumerated as the aggregates, the physical elements and the elements of sense-experience.”

“Actions do not disappear even after a hundred billion aeons.

When they have reached completion and it is time, they fruit for living beings.”

“Formerly, monks, in times past in this Bhadra Aeon,⁸³ when a human life-span was twenty-thousand years, a fully awakened one named Kāśyapa arose in the world – perfect in wisdom and conduct, well-farer, unsurpassed knower of the world, trainer of those ready to be trained, teacher of gods and men, Buddha, Exalted One. He lived near to the city of Vārāṇasī, in the deer-park at Rṣipatana. That Exalted One, the perfect and full Buddha Kāśyapa, had a nephew named Aśoka, and, seeking *mokṣa*, he went forth in the presence of the Exalted One. Thinking that *mokṣa* was in his power he did not make much effort. A long time later, Aśoka spent the rainy season in the country. The Exalted One, the fully awakened Buddha Kāśyapa, having done all the work of a *buddha*, like a fire that had run out of fuel, reached his final resting place, and Aśoka the monk was in secluded meditation⁸⁴ under an *aśoka* [tree]. The deity who lived in that *aśoka* tree heard about the *parinirvāṇa* of the Exalted One, the fully awakened Buddha Kāśyapa, and began to cry. And as she cried, teardrops began to fall onto Aśoka’s body. Aśoka turned his face upwards and said to the crying deity, ‘Why are you crying, deity?’ The deity said, ‘Today, in the middle watch of the night, will be the *parinirvāṇa* of the Exalted One, the full and perfect Buddha Kāśyapa.’ Having heard the deity’s words, Aśoka trembled as if he had been mortally wounded, and began to weep pitifully. Then the deity asked, ‘Why are you crying?’ Aśoka replied, ‘Because I am separated from my teacher and separated from my kinsman! Kāśyapa the perfectly awakened one is my uncle, and I have been living confidently, without striving. It is far away, and I am just an ordinary man. Because of the lost time, I am not able to attain excellence.’ The deity said, ‘But if I were to take sir to the Exalted One’s presence, would that be possible?’ Aśoka replied, ‘Yes, for my awakening would be matured at the moment of seeing the Exalted One, and I would be able to attain excellence.’ So the deity, using supernormal power, took Aśoka to the presence of the Exalted One, and at the sight of the Exalted One he became faithful. Then the Exalted One Kāśyapa explained the *dharma* of such a kind that on hearing it he realised arhatship. And that venerable Aśoka attained to *parinirvāṇa* first, and then the Exalted One, the perfect Buddha Kāśyapa.

“Then that deity, seeing that Venerable Aśoka had attained *parinirvāṇa*, became joyful and thought, ‘Excellence has been attained by this venerable someone, having come here entirely because of me. In the same way may I, in a future time, be amongst the renouncers of this young man named Uttara, to

⁸² This formulaic passage seems to have become distorted and abbreviated, leaving *bāhye* impossible to translate in situ. See Speyer 1958: 237 n.1.

⁸³ The *bhadra kalpa* is the current aeon, in which Gautama forms the fourth of five *buddhas* to arise.

⁸⁴ The phrase *pratisaṃlīno babhūva* suggests that he was ‘retired’ or ‘withdrawn’, but this is usually understood to be for the purpose of meditation. See BHSD *pratisaṃlīna*.

whom the Exalted One Kāśyapa has explained, “Young man, you will be a perfectly awakened one, an *arhat*, a Tathāgata named Śākyamuni, when the life-span of men is a hundred years!” Amongst his renouncers, when he has reached his final resting place, may I become the last of his personal disciples, called forth with the words “Come, monk!” And may I achieve *parinirvāṇa* before the Exalted One, and then the Exalted One Śākyamuni.”

The Exalted One said, “What do you think, monks? She who at that time on that occasion was the deity, that was Subhadra. Therefore, monks, you should train in this way: We will dwell as good friends, good companions, good associates, not evil friends, evil companions, evil associates. In this way, monks, you should train.”

Then Venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One, “Sir, when I am here alone and solitary in retreat, this thought arises in my mind, that this is half of the religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations.” “You should not say this, Ānanda, that this is half of the religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations. Ānanda, this is the entire, complete, whole, pure, accomplished religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil friendship, evil companionship and evil associations. What is the reason for this? Because, Ānanda, beings who are subject to the experience of rebirth come to me as their spiritual friend and are liberated from the experience of rebirth, and those beings who experience ageing, sickness, grief, death, lamentation, suffering, melancholy and mental anguish are freed from mental anguish [etc]. In this manner, Ānanda, it should be understood, that this is the entire, complete, whole, pure, accomplished religious life, namely good friendship, good companionship and good associations, and not evil companionship, evil friendship, and evil associations. In this way, Ānanda, you should train.”

Thus spoke the Exalted One, and the monks were delighted and praised the Exalted One’s speech.

Abbreviations

BHSD *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, see Edgerton 1970.

DP *Dictionary of Pāli*, see Cone 2001-2010.

DPPN *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, see Malalasekera 1997.

MMW Monier Monier-Williams’ *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

PED *Pali-English Dictionary*, see Rhys-Davids and Stede 1921-1925.

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